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For our  
children's sake



# FOR OUR CHILDREN'S SAKE:

A Call to  
Community Action  
Against

## YOUTH VIOLENCE

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**FINAL REPORT**

**Attorney General Joe Mazurek's**

**Task Force on Youth Violence**

**December 1996**



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December 1996

Dear Attorney General Mazurek:

After a year of study and discussion, your Task Force on Youth Violence has completed its work. On behalf of the task force members, I am pleased to present you with this report, which contains our conclusions and recommendations.

Over the past year, we have examined the issue of youth violence from both the statistical perspective and from our own individual perspectives as parents, prosecutors, educators, law enforcement officers and human services providers. We know from studying the data that youth violence has increased nationally. While that increase has been smaller in Montana, we still find the trend disturbing. We must take steps now to prevent violence from becoming even more of a problem with our young people.

The Task Force strongly believes we have an opportunity here in Montana to make a difference, by acting now. While we are seeing troubling incidents of violent behavior, such behavior is not epidemic. Task Force members believe Montanans can keep this problem from mushrooming by building on our strengths and shoring up those areas where we are weak.

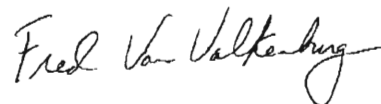
In looking at ways to address the issue of youth violence, the Task Force agreed to focus its attentions on community-oriented — rather than legislative — solutions. We were well aware that the 1995 Legislature had created the Juvenile Justice and Mental Health Study Commission to review issues related to juvenile crime. Because that commission will be making recommendations for legislative action, the Task Force chose instead to emphasize strategies that families, schools and communities can use now, without waiting for action from the state or federal government.

The Task Force has identified promising strategies that we believe could strengthen Montana's families, as well as our community response to violence. These strategies also can be tailored to meet the needs of individual communities.

We want to draw attention in particular to our recommendation that you join with other state leaders to focus public attention on this issue. Together, you could promote the need to address violence and could motivate people to work, individually and together, on efforts that will help Montana's children grow up in a healthy, violence-free environment.

The members of the Task Force are pleased to present this report and offer our continued support in implementing its recommendations. We thank you for seeking our participation in this effort.

Sincerely,



Fred Van Valkenburg, Chair



# INTRODUCTION

*"Today's youth are increasingly restless, and violence is fast becoming a way of life for them. Fueled by the need for acceptance, increased chemical use and abuse, and the availability of weapons, tomorrow's violence will escalate out of control unless society can turn the tide now."*

— Dave Ward, Chief of Police, Billings



The nearly fatal beating of an 8-week-old infant by a 6-year-old boy in California stunned the nation in April 1996, as Americans confronted once again the reality that our country's children are capable of committing brutal crimes.

Montanans saw evidence that same week that their children are not immune. Over the course of four days:

- Billings authorities arrested a 16-year-old boy in the shooting death of a convenience store clerk.
- Great Falls authorities arrested a 14-year-old girl in the shooting death of her father.
- Six Kalispell youth, ages 13 to 15, were sentenced for beating a 14-year-old girl so severely they broke a bone in her face and knocked her braces loose, and
- Two 19-year-olds in Butte were sentenced for a casino robbery in which they threatened employees with a knife and a handgun.

And in June 1996, two Montana preschoolers — ages 4 and 5 — assaulted a wheelchair-bound woman by pouring household cleaners, chemicals and food on her after they ransacked her home.

The troubling national trends in youth violence clearly are seeping into Montana.

## Seeking a Solution

In 1994, Attorney General Joe Mazurek and Superintendent of Public Instruction Nancy Keenan held a series of meetings with students, teachers, parents and concerned citizens in seven Montana communities. They

wanted to explore the issue of youth violence, to learn whether Montanans were concerned and to hear what people thought could be done to help Montana's children. Those who attended the community meetings were passionate in their concern for Montana's youth and their desire to prevent violence from taking root in Montana.

Following the meetings, Attorney General Mazurek formed the Attorney General's Task Force on Youth Violence. The group met from September 1995 to September 1996, to look at statistics on youth violence, to examine the root causes of this violence, and to discuss how Montana's urban, rural and tribal communities can respond to it. The Task Force held meetings in Billings and Helena and heard testimony from Billings and Butte teenagers, some of whom had been involved in the juvenile justice system and others who were active in their schools and communities. Task Force members also reviewed programs in use in Montana and elsewhere that seek to prevent violence and provide positive alternatives for youths, families and communities.

The Task Force focused primarily on what it can do to educate communities about the problems of youth violence and to assist them in developing ways to address these problems. Its review of community action and collaboration among schools, law enforcement, citizen groups, tribes and others working to provide a healthier community showed areas in which inroads can be made to reduce youth violence. The Task Force believes that through strong partnerships at the local and state levels, Montanans can prevent their youth from being pulled into — and swept under by — the tide of violence.

*The troubling national trends in youth violence clearly are seeping into Montana.*

*The Task Force believes that through strong partnerships at the local and state levels, Montanans can prevent their youth from being pulled into — and swept under by — the tide of violence.*

# A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH



The Task Force began its work by reviewing statistical data, in an effort to determine the scope of youth violence in Montana and the United States. For its review, the Task Force defined youth violence as acts committed by juveniles age 18 or younger that cause physical, emotional and/or psychological harm to the individual youth, to other people or to property.

## National Trends

The 1996 statistical summary by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provided sobering data on juvenile crime, showing that after more than a decade of relative stability, the juvenile violent crime rate soared by more than 50 percent between 1988 and 1994. In 1994, juveniles were responsible for:

- 10 percent of the murders committed in the United States.
- 13 percent of the aggravated assaults.
- 14 percent of forcible rapes.
- 20 percent of robberies.

In addition, one in seven serious crimes involved juveniles in groups.

In its review of other statistical reports, the Task Force also found that:

- The number of adolescents committing murder has increased dramatically, beginning in 1988.
- The proportion of adolescents involved in some type of serious, violent offense has increased between 8 and 10 percent.
- Violent acts committed today by youth are more lethal, with a greater proportion resulting in serious injury or death. This increased severity of violence is explained largely by the increased use of handguns in violent exchanges.

- The proportion of adolescents who are victimized by violent crimes has increased substantially. The trend is particularly noticeable among 12- to 15-year-olds.

The OJJDP predicts that if trends continue as they have over the past 10 years, juvenile arrests for violent crime will double by the year 2010.

## Montana Trends

Statistics compiled by the Montana Board of Crime Control show increases, as well, in crimes committed by juveniles against other people. The statistics are based on crimes reported by juvenile probation offices throughout most of Montana, but generally do not include the state's Indian reservations.

In Montana, the number of assaults committed by youths increased from 406 in 1990 to 1,232 in 1995 — a 203 percent increase. The number of aggravated assaults, which result in serious bodily injury, increased from 28 to 79, or 182 percent. Meanwhile, the number of juveniles arrested for carrying concealed weapons increased from 21 in 1990 to 148 in 1995, a 605 percent increase.

In 1995, seven deliberate homicides and two negligent homicides were attributed to juveniles. In the last half of the 1980s, no youths were charged with deliberate homicide at all; by 1990, only one youth was charged with deliberate homicide and one with negligent homicide.

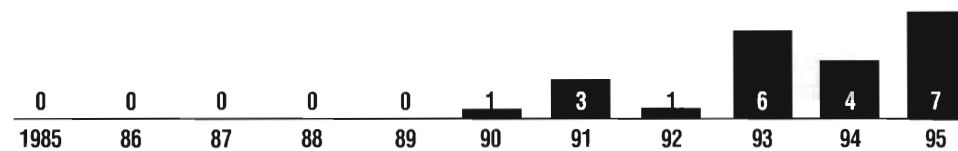
Overall, the number of violent crimes committed by youths increased 8.5 percent from 1994 to 1995, from 2,141 offenses in 1994 to 2,324 in 1995. Offenders between the ages of 13 and 14 made up the largest proportion of youthful offenders in 1995; 26 percent of the female offenders and 25 percent of the male offenders were in this age range.

*If trends continue as they have over the past 10 years, juvenile arrests for violent crime will double by the year 2010.*

Native Americans made up a disproportionate number of juvenile offenders in 1995. While census figures show that Native Americans make up about 6 percent of Montana's population, they accounted for more than 13 percent of the juveniles referred to the state's Youth Court system in 1995. That percentage has remained relatively stable over the past several years. State statistics also show that Native Americans represent about 18 percent of the inmates at the Montana State Prison and 25 percent of those at the Women's Prison. This over-representation in the justice system indicates that Native American youth have special needs that must be addressed by their communities, as well as the justice system.

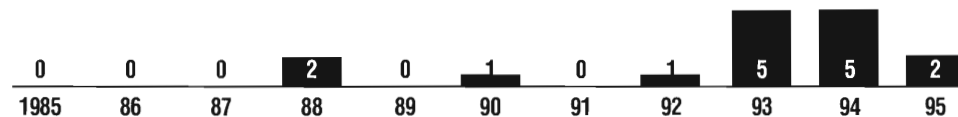
The following graphs, based on October 1996 figures from the Montana Board of Crime Control, show trends for violent youth crime in Montana over the past five years. While the statistics are subject to a number of variables, including different reporting methods by local law enforcement agencies and varying interpretations of terms, the trends they show are clear.

### Deliberate Homicide



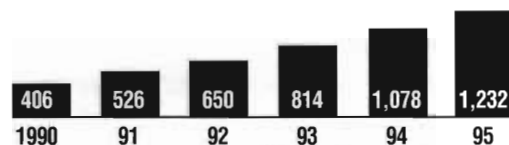
Under 45-5-102 MCA, a person commits deliberate homicide if he or she purposely or knowingly kills a person or causes a death during the commission of any forcible felony.

### Negligent Homicide



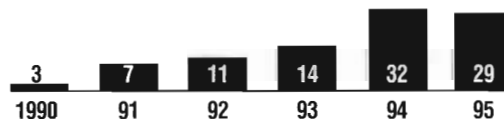
Under 45-5-104 MCA, a person commits negligent homicide if he or she negligently causes the death of another person.

### Assault



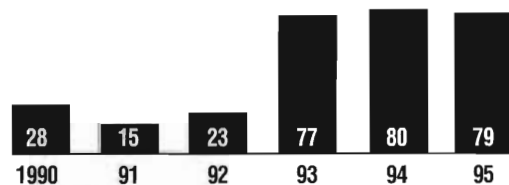
Under 45-5-201, a person commits assault if he or she purposely or knowingly causes bodily injury to another person; negligently injures another person with a weapon; purposely or knowingly makes physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature; or purposely or knowingly causes another person to reasonably fear bodily injury.

### Felony Assault



Under 45-5-202(2), a person commits felony assault if he or she uses a weapon to purposely or knowingly cause bodily injury to another person.

### Aggravated Assault



Under 45-5-202, a person commits aggravated assault if he or she purposely or knowingly causes serious bodily injury to another person.

### Sexual Intercourse without Consent



Under 45-5-503, a person commits sexual intercourse without consent if he knowingly has intercourse without the consent of another person.

*The number of juveniles arrested for carrying concealed weapons increased from 21 in 1990 to 148 in 1995, a 605 percent increase.*

## The Reasons Behind the Numbers

In looking at factors that could push youth toward violent behavior, the Task Force reviewed many reports and believed that the “*Kids and Violence*” report issued by the National Governors Association in 1994 summed up its findings. A piece summarized in that report, “*Risk Factors for Youth Violence*” by Terrence P. Thornberry, provides clear and concise information about studies conducted over the last decade on children and violent behavior. Highlights from that paper include:

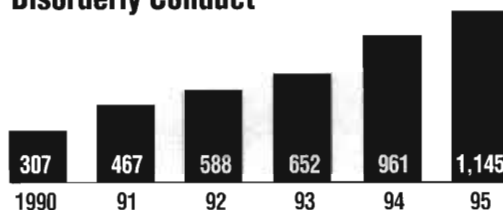
- Growing evidence shows that, for many children, involvement in aggression and violence begins as early as age three or four and grows progressively more pronounced.
- Risk factors are interrelated, and when combined, are likely to generate a substantially higher risk for violence. For example, children who are poorly supervised by their parents and who are involved with highly delinquent peers have a much higher likelihood of violence than do children experiencing only one of these risk factors.
- Programs and services work best when they are designed for the long term. They should be available for years, rather than months, to combat the persistent nature of violent behavior.

Another piece included in the report, “*Dimensions of Youth Violence*” by Donna Maria Garnett, presents statistics on youth violence, including the demographics and characteristics of perpetrators and victims of juvenile violence. The study found that:

- Many youth who commit violent acts have an early history of school failure and often experience rejection by their peers during the early grades.
- The capacity of communities to support families has diminished. Youth in impoverished neighborhoods are more likely to experience prolonged academic failure and have fewer role models who value education and traditional values.

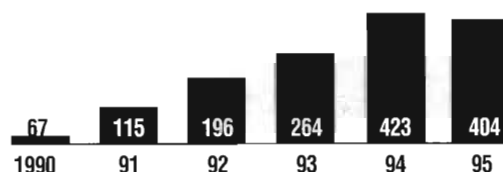
*Some young people feel out of place among their peers and feel they must fight — literally — to earn enough respect or fear to gain standing in the eyes of others.*

### Disorderly Conduct



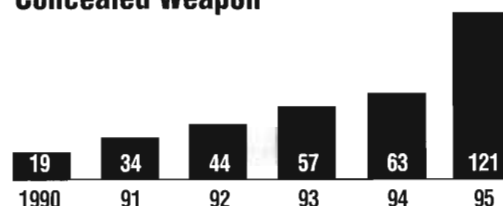
Under 45-8-101 MCA, a person commits disorderly conduct if he or she knowingly disturbs the peace by fighting; challenging another to a fight; discharging firearms; using threatening or abusive language; rendering vehicular or pedestrian traffic impassable; making access to or from a public or private place impassable; disturbing or disrupting any lawful assembly; providing a false report of a fire or other catastrophe; or creating a hazardous or physically offensive condition by any act that serves no legitimate purpose.

### Obstructing an Officer



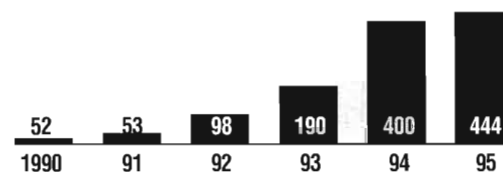
Under 45-7-302 MCA, a person obstructs a peace officer if he or she knowingly obstructs, impairs or hinders the enforcement of the law, the preservation of the peace or the performance of a governmental function.

### Concealed Weapon



Under 45-8-316 MCA, a person commits this offense by carrying concealed a dirk, dagger, pistol, revolver, slingshot, sword cane, billy, knuckles made of any metal or hard substance, knife with a blade four inches or longer, or other deadly weapon.

### Misdemeanor Possession of Drugs



Under 45-9-102 MCA, a person commits the offense of criminal possession of dangerous drugs if he or she possesses any marijuana, opiates, opium derivatives, hallucinogenic substances, depressants, stimulants, narcotic drugs, or anabolic steroids.

- Long-term studies of the impact of media violence on children suggest that one of the strongest predictors of how aggressive a young man will be at age-19 is a preference for violent television programs at age eight.

For many youth, violence is viewed as either the only way or the most effective way to achieve status, respect and other social and personal needs. One of the teens who testified before the Task Force stated: "Fighting is the only way to gain respect. The bruises go away, but if somebody doesn't respect you, that lasts a long time." Another youth with him chimed in to agree. These teens have had few positive role models or few opportunities to learn alternative ways of dealing with conflict.

## Reasons for Hope

Most Montana children are raised in loving families, educated in schools that welcome them and their parents, and brought up in a community from which they learn and to which they contribute. They are able to withstand the societal pressures they encounter on the road to adulthood. These children, in fact, make up the majority of Montana's youth population.

But there are children in Montana who face personal and social hardships that may nudge them toward violent behavior. Some grow up with violence in their homes. Some are raised by parents who lack the skills to instill values and social responsibility in them. Some come from families where parents or others abuse alcohol or other drugs. Some feel out of place among their peers and feel they must fight — literally — to earn enough respect or fear to gain standing in the eyes of others.

Yet studies of youths facing such pressures show that many overcome them and lead productive lives. These youths are termed "resilient," and their resiliency stems largely from their ability to form a strong relationship with a caring adult and to feel as though they have positive, contributing roles to play in life. Resilient children overcome obstacles when they are provided with care and support, with high expectations from adults, and with encouragement from others to participate in family, school, tribal or community activities.

Children most often find the acceptance and support they need within the home, particularly in their early years. But studies have shown that if children's major risks come from within the family — with abusive, alcoholic or neglectful parents — they may derive the relationships and support they need from other individuals, from their school or from their community. And if they do, they are likely to overcome the negative factors in their lives and are more likely to become emotionally healthy, competent adults.

This research provides hope in the quest to reduce youth violence. It shows that each Montanan can make a difference by becoming involved in a child's life. Young people succeed when they know they are valued and that several people outside their families know and care about them.

The Task Force believes that Montanans should work individually and together in their families, schools and communities toward the collective goal of raising a generation of children who will seek alternatives to violence in settling their disputes and establishing their places in the world.

*Resilient children overcome obstacles when they are provided with care and support, with high expectations from adults, and with encouragement from others to participate in family, school, tribal or community activities.*

# A ROLE FOR EVERY MONTANAN



*By working together, Montanans will be able to accomplish much in giving the state's children a healthy start and a guiding hand toward a violence-free future.*

Throughout its deliberations, the Task Force struggled to determine the role the state can play in what must become a campaign against youth violence and the role communities and individuals must assume. The Task Force concluded that the state alone cannot effectively address youth violence through one or two sweeping programs. Instead, the Task Force believes that the state's best role lies in supporting each community as it tailors initiatives that will meet the needs of its own children. Toward that end, the Task Force recommends that:

- The Attorney General's Office develop educational materials to assist communities in their anti-violence efforts.
- The Attorney General work with communities that request assistance in developing solutions to benefit their youth.
- The Attorney General encourage communities to form violence prevention councils or use existing councils to convene discussions on youth violence and ways each community can meet the needs of its youth. The Attorney General could encourage county attorneys, who are familiar with juvenile crime, to play a key role in convening forums for discussion in their respective counties. Task Force members stand ready to assist in such efforts in their own communities.
- State, local and tribal leaders cooperate in efforts to educate and motivate communities to tackle the difficult issues involved in youth violence and to develop solutions to benefit our youth, our state and, ultimately, each one of us.

The Task Force also strongly supports community collaboration, in which individuals and public, private and non-profit organizations work together toward a common goal. Montana's children can benefit most when those who work with children — such as parents, extended family members, teachers, human services providers, law enforcement and criminal justice professionals, community

leaders and clergy members — coordinate their efforts so youth who need assistance receive it in a comprehensive manner.

In reviewing existing examples of community action and collaboration among schools, law enforcement, citizen groups and others working to provide a healthier community, the Task Force saw areas in which inroads could be made in reducing youth violence. The Task Force believes Montanans can adapt these programs to meet their needs and offers an overview of them in this report. The Task Force recommends promising strategies in five broad areas: families, schools, communities, the criminal justice system and community collaboration. The Task Force emphasizes that these strategies are designed to provide community leaders and members with a broad array of choices to consider for their own uses. What may work in one community may not be needed or successful in another. The strategies do not provide a set menu, but rather a smorgasbord from which communities can choose the suggestions that hold the most promise for their particular circumstances.

This report also provides appendices that offer examples of existing efforts in these areas. The list of examples is by no means exhaustive; it is meant, instead, to provide ideas and contact people for programs that have been put into place.

The Task Force has also identified special concerns that are outlined in a separate section. These concerns raise issues involving gangs, guns, alcohol and other drugs that we as communities and as a state must address.

The ideas incorporated in this report offer concrete suggestions for families, schools, communities and the justice system. Many ideas clearly would benefit from collaboration among the various groups that provide services to Montana's youth. By working together, Montanans will be able to accomplish much in giving the state's children a healthy start and a guiding hand toward a violence-free future.

# FAMILIES

*"Violent children today do not have the privilege of good parenting. From their family history, parents do not know how to parent. Families are facing trauma on top of trauma."*

— Dr. Dan Foster, Director of Mental Health, Blackfeet Community Hospital



Families provide the first and foremost educational experience children receive. From birth, the ways in which children are treated and the examples their parents provide strongly influence their development, their view of the world, and their ability to relate to other people.

Yet at a time when children are subject to an increasing number of stresses in their lives, many parents are feeling pressures that may detract from their ability to raise their children as well as they would like. These parents are struggling to make ends meet with paychecks that haven't kept up with inflation; trying to keep up in an increasingly competitive job market and with constantly changing technology; finding themselves sandwiched between caring for their children and for their aging parents; and, in many cases, juggling these and other pressures without the immediate support of extended family members.

In some families, parents have simply not taught their children to be responsible and accountable. In others, violence is a way of life. Many children grow up witnessing abuse in the home. Often, they may resort to violence at an early age without knowing it is not an accepted response to pressures in their life. But the presence of at least one nurturing and empathetic adult could make a significant difference in the lives of these children.

It is critical that communities work with parents to assure they receive the assistance they may need to raise children who are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. In an ideal situation, state, local and tribal agencies would provide a long-term continuum of care

that will ensure all families in need are served. At a minimum, communities must examine ways to support families.

In discussing the role of families in addressing youth violence, the Task Force identified the following strengths, weaknesses and promising strategies.

## Strengths

- Most family units remain strong in Montana.
- Professionals in schools and human services agencies are committed to strengthening the families with whom they work.
- Many communities offer educational programs for parents and families.
- Tribal communities welcome children into many celebrations and other cultural observances.

## Weaknesses

- The reported incidents of family violence continue to increase. Domestic violence offenses increased by 13 percent in 1995, from 3,170 reported incidents in 1994 to 3,344 in 1995.
- A high number of children are found to be abused or neglected. In Montana, 983 incidents of physical or emotional abuse involving children were substantiated in fiscal year 1995.
- Many families face increasing financial and job pressures. On average in 1995, 5.9 percent of Montanans were without jobs. The poverty rate in our state stands at 13.4 percent, a three-year average

*It is critical that communities work with parents to assure they receive the assistance they may need to raise children who are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.*

based on rates from 1992 to 1994. Between 1994 and 1995, total personal income rose 6 percent, keeping only slightly ahead of a 3 percent increase in inflation.

- Many families rely on television as a baby-sitter, resulting in greater opportunity for children to view violent programs without adult guidance or interpretation.

## Promising Strategies for Families

(See Appendix B for specific examples)

### 1 Promote family activities.

Research shows that children benefit greatly from uninterrupted time with their parents. Holding family meetings or family nights or having dinner together at least one night a week can encourage communication and strengthen family bonds. Parents also should seek out activities in which the whole family can participate.

### 2 Provide positive family role models.

Strong families can provide good role models to other parents and children in a number of ways. New parents who may be at risk for child abuse can benefit from the support and advice of parents or grandparents who have been through the stresses of caring for and raising infants and toddlers. Children from single-parent homes and abusive or at-risk families can benefit from inclusion in the activities of other loving families.

### 3 Establish clear rules within the family.

Researchers agree that children benefit from clear guidelines on acceptable conduct and from limits such as curfews established by their parents. Teens who spoke with Attorney General Mazurek and Superintendent Keenan in their 1994 meetings also acknowledged that they wanted such guidelines from their parents.

### 4 Promote the positive use of TV and other forms of media.

Television viewing, computer games and video games tend to isolate children from their parents and siblings. Children benefit from spending more time with people than with inanimate objects, no matter how interactive these objects may be. The Task Force recognizes that TV and computers offer many educational benefits, but believes children benefit most when their parents and caregivers monitor the programs, join with children in viewing or using them, and discuss issues that these programs — particularly those containing violence — might raise.

### 5 Monitor the content of TV programs, movies and music.

These mediums, in particular, contain high levels of violence. While recognizing that Montana alone can do little to affect the content, Attorney General Mazurek is working with other attorneys general and the American Medical Association to reduce the levels of violence in these popular media. Parents can have an effect, as well, by discussing with their children the content of the programs and movies they watch and the music they listen to.

*Children benefit from spending more time with people than with inanimate objects, no matter how interactive these objects may be.*

**6 Provide parenting skills training and support or discussion groups for parents of all ages.**

Numerous community resources exist to encourage and sponsor programs that will help parents gain the skills they need to be their children's first and best teachers. Parents need support and education throughout their children's lives, so they can be prepared to help their children meet the challenges they will encounter at each stage of development.

**7 Encourage families to use community-based services that reduce family violence and victimization.**

Numerous Montana communities have shelters and offer other programs to support victims of family violence and provide counseling for offenders. Anger management and peer mediation programs also can assist both adults and children in working through issues related to family violence.

**8 Create multiple opportunities for youth and families to learn more about creating a healthy environment for themselves.**

Families could benefit from activities and programs that teach life skills. Such programs could be offered through churches, hospitals, PTAs, adult education centers and family living courses in the schools. Families should be encouraged to seek out and participate in such opportunities.

**9 Promote foster/adoptive/extended families for children who need to be placed outside their homes.**

Traditionally, finding families to take in children in need has been difficult. Yet these children would greatly benefit from a stable, loving environment. The Task Force recommends that businesses, civic groups and others in a community work together on promotional campaigns that will encourage families to reach out to children in need. The Task Force also recommends that the state ensure the needs of foster children are met and take steps to address the problems in recruiting and retaining foster families in Montana.

**10 Adopt family-friendly policies in the workplace.**

Working parents often have difficulty taking time off to attend events involving their children. Children of working parents may be left home alone in the hours after school ends and before parents return home. The Task Force encourages employers to adjust to the family needs of their employees by developing flexible ways to meet the demands of employees' work and family schedules.

*Parents need support and education throughout their children's lives, so they can be prepared to help their children meet the challenges they will encounter at each stage of development.*

# SCHOOLS



*"Our goal is to have schools remain a safe haven for learning and growing. To do this, we must continue to enjoy a strong partnership with parents and the community."*

— Dr. Paula Butterfield, Superintendent, Bozeman Public Schools

Schools are, in many respects, miniature communities. Everything that happens in a community — including violence — happens in a school.

For many reasons, schools are uniquely positioned to assist in efforts to reduce youth violence. For the majority of their childhood years, young people are attending school. Schools also have facilities — libraries, gymnasiums, sports fields — that offer both in-school and after-hours opportunities for students. And in the classroom and on the playground, children learn important social skills through their interactions with teachers and other students. Schools provide an opportunity to emphasize the need for respectful behavior among students and between school personnel and students.

However, students spend only about 12 percent of their time in a formal educational setting during the year. Thus while schools can offer formal violence prevention programs, these programs alone cannot provide children with all the education they need on issues involving violence. Parents and community organizations must also play a role in teaching children about violence and its consequences, as well as ways to avoid and prevent it.

In discussing the role of schools in addressing youth violence, the Task Force identified the following strengths, weaknesses and promising strategies.

## Strengths

- Montana schools focus on academic achievement, and students consistently score higher than the national average on standardized tests.
- Communities generally support the importance of a well-educated population.
- Schools are a focal point for communities, particularly in rural areas and on Indian reservations.
- A high number of parents are involved in their children's education during the elementary grades, when many volunteer in the classrooms and monitor their children's progress.
- Montana has relatively small school and class sizes that allow for individual attention and provide a sense of belonging.
- Most schools offer a large variety of extracurricular activities for all ages.
- Many adults have come back to teach in the communities in which they were educated, showing how much they care about the community and its schools.
- Schools are incorporating community and tribal culture and tradition as part of their curricula.
- The Montana Behavior Initiative, supported by a wide variety of educational organizations and state agencies, is working in schools to better equip all school staff to effectively reduce the level of violence and the number of dropouts or referrals to other agencies.
- Many schools have developed healthy school-business partnerships, creating a positive link between school personnel and students and local businesses. These links provide insight into the daily operation of a business and create opportunities for working people to have direct contact with schoolchildren.

*FBI statistics show that 22 percent of violent juvenile crime occurs between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on school days.*

## **Weaknesses**

- Many schools lack adequate funding to support a growing number of students and address building maintenance issues.
- Class sizes increase in the higher grades in many school districts. State law allows up to 30 students per class in grades 5 through 12.
- Federal or state curriculum mandates often require expenditures without providing the necessary funds.
- Many schools are unable to meet the needs of the increasing number of emotionally disturbed students now channeled into regular classrooms, because they lack the money to adequately train teachers and provide the resources necessary.
- Schools have a history of limited authority and resources to address truancy problems.
- Some parents do not support the schools' efforts to discipline their children.
- The level of parental involvement in the middle schools and high schools decreases, with volunteerism and monitoring of activity and educational programs often dropping off dramatically. Yet monitoring of activity becomes even more important as the student grows older.
- Schools are open a limited number of hours and days, making their resources unavailable to children and communities for more than half of the year.
- The number of community-school partnerships diminishes in the upper grades.

## **Promising Strategies for Schools**

(See Appendix C for specific examples)

### **1 Institute programs that help students and teachers learn how to deal with and change problem behavior.**

Young people who have been taught to work out their problems with others in a non-confrontational manner are less likely to resort to violence when disputes arise. Schools can:

- Increase training for classroom teachers on effective classroom organization and behavior management.
- Provide conflict resolution and violence prevention training for both students and educators.
- Develop peer mediation programs, in which students work with each other to solve problems that have occurred. A number of school districts around Montana have instituted such programs.

### **2 Open schools after regular hours to allow youths to participate in healthy, planned activities.**

FBI statistics show that 22 percent of violent juvenile crime occurs between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. on school days. Many children of working parents are unsupervised from the time school ends until their parents return home from work. Opening schools after regular school hours would provide these children with alternative activities. Volunteers could be recruited to provide tutoring or other activities.

### **3 Encourage efforts to create resilient children.**

A strong relationship with at least one adult is a key factor in resiliency in children who may have troubled lives. Schools provide avenues for adults — either teachers, volunteers or older students — to work closely with at-risk students. Schools can:

- Provide teachers with training on resiliency in children.
- Develop and promote one-on-one mentoring programs that involve older students or adults.

### **4 Identify as quickly as possible the high-risk students who are transferred from school to school.**

By sharing information on transfer students, schools can help each other identify at-risk youth more quickly and develop prevention programs for them. Some schools in Montana now require that students provide their unofficial records before they enter the school; these records often can be faxed before the official record is compiled and sent. In most cases, current technology allows for immediate access to students' records.

### **5 Develop interagency councils to coordinate identification and intervention efforts on behalf of youth in need of services.**

Too often, law enforcement, social service agencies and schools work in isolation. While all of these groups may be working with the same child, each may be unaware of actions the others are taking. Increased communication between professionals is critical to identifying and intervening with youth who resort to violence. Interagency councils should include personnel from schools, the judicial system, probation, law enforcement, human services and community-based support programs such as domestic violence shelters. Councils with such a broad membership could identify youths in need of assistance, develop plans to address their needs, and provide a built-in tracking system for monitoring youth over an extended period of time.

- State law allows the formation of county interdisciplinary child information teams made up of school, law enforcement, criminal justice and human services officials. The members of the team may share information that other members may be able to use in serving a child. Those working for agencies that directly deal with students should work together to share the pertinent information and use this information to develop an action plan for the student. Many communities have successfully initiated interagency councils.

### **6 Hire school resource officers to work in conjunction with local law enforcement.**

Youth who are expelled or suspended from school or who have dropped out may cause more trouble in their communities. Schools, parents and law enforcement need to make an effort to get kids in school and keep them there. Resource officers can offer Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) classes or courses in resisting gangs or can help in planning of prevention activities. Schools could team up with D.A.R.E. officers, truancy officers, courts and parents in this effort and provide alternatives to the regular school program when needed.

**7 Encourage efforts that teach students awareness of racial, cultural and socio-economic issues.**

Much of the conflict among students is caused by misunderstandings about each others' backgrounds. A greater awareness of the different groups that make up society — and schools as a microcosm of that society — could help students resolve their differences more easily and with less conflict.

**8 Develop policies that deal with crisis/behavior problems in schools.**

Many districts have policies to address behavior problems and crises that may occur. School districts should continually update, review and revise these policies to keep them current. They also should provide teachers and other personnel with training and appropriate drills.

**9 Encourage schools to work with parents in devising strategies to address disruptive behavior.**

Schools could work with their parent councils and consult with students to develop effective ways to deal with disruptive students. They also could open their teacher training sessions on these issues to parents.

**10 Make a concerted effort to develop assistance teams within each school district building.**

Such teams would provide a safety net and quick intervention for high-risk students who have demonstrated social and educational needs; provide a strong resource and support group for staff members working with special needs students; and establish consistent and detailed plans for emergency situations ranging from threats to student and staff safety to natural disasters.

**11 Pursue placement in alternative educational programs for students with conduct disorders.**

All students deserve to receive an education, and some children learn better in a non-traditional learning environment. Schools should identify at an early age children who have conduct disorders and work with them, to prevent additional problems later on.

# COMMUNITIES



*"Communities frequently focus on youth violence as if it were a distinct problem. I believe that it is more useful to think of it as a symptom of a complex system of factors and forces, and to work in a coordinated way on developing and maintaining system-wide strategies that build conditions supportive of children and youth."*

—Greg Oliver, Director of Health Promotion, Missoula City-County Health Department

A community at its most literal definition may be any city or town. But at its best, a community is a group of people working toward a unified goal.

Montana is unique in that even its largest cities are relatively small. This allows residents to develop and maintain strong networks of relationships that create a true sense of community. Individuals do not become lost in the crowd.

Montana's urban, rural and tribal communities all possess within themselves smaller communities made up of neighborhoods, civic groups, businesses, spiritual groups, professional associations and sports associations. These "communities-within-a-community" can contribute tremendously toward a unified goal of providing a safe, healthy environment for children.

In discussing the role of Montana communities in addressing youth violence, the Task Force identified the following strengths, weaknesses and promising strategies.

## Strengths

- Most communities have the ability to draw people together to work toward a common goal.
- Montana communities retain a "small-town" atmosphere in which people know others and care about the overall well-being of their community's residents.
- Many communities offer programs for youth and at-risk families.
- Most Montana cities and towns are places where people know each other and are used to working together to solve problems.

## Weaknesses

- Many communities have experienced rapid changes in population or economic conditions, creating circumstances that could result in increased youth violence.
- Some communities lack resources to support change that has occurred and to meet the needs of new and longtime residents alike.
- A lack of coordination often exists among programs designed to serve youth.
- Some community members are unaware of the resources available in their area to prevent youth violence.
- Changes in neighborhood makeup and in the number of parents working outside the home have resulted in fewer people knowing their neighbors and keeping an eye on the neighborhood children, particularly during weekday hours.
- Growth has occurred in some activities, such as gambling, that separate adults and young people and thus end up discouraging family activities.
- Local governments are cutting back on recreational activities for youth because of budget constraints.
- Families at risk may face stigmatization when seeking help in addressing the problems they face.

*Many communities have experienced rapid changes in population or economic conditions, creating circumstances that could result in increased youth violence.*

# Promising Strategies for Communities

(See Appendix D for specific examples)

## **1 Hold community meetings and conferences to focus attention on youth-related issues and to motivate action toward solutions.**

The Task Force encourages community leaders to make youth issues and the reduction of youth violence a top priority. Community leaders and local media are in a position to draw public attention to the issue and to inspire individuals and organizations to become involved in violence-reduction efforts.

## **2 Create community crisis centers with trained professionals to provide service and referrals for crime victims.**

Victims of crisis situations, such as family abuse or violent crime, can benefit from crisis centers that direct them to the services they need. Law enforcement, human services groups and volunteer organizations should work together closely to ensure that victims are referred to all existing services they may need.

## **3 Create opportunities for prevention groups to work together.**

By bringing together groups that strive to prevent crime, communities can foster a climate of justice, strengthen their overall response to crime, and develop new partnerships and opportunities for prevention efforts.

## **4 Reduce the factors that encourage crime in certain areas of a community.**

Crime is more likely to occur, for example, in poorly lighted areas or run-down areas of town, where vandalism has already occurred. Gang members sometimes use graffiti to signify their presence; quick removal of such graffiti reduces its importance and its impact. Meanwhile, programs such as Neighborhood Watch and McGruff houses have been shown to reduce crime. Communities should look for ways to involve their residents — including youth and members of civic organizations — in crime prevention activities and in efforts to improve areas where crime or vandalism occurs.

## **5 Develop safe communities programs.**

Communities can band together to develop formalized plans to increase safety and reduce violence. By involving local leaders, members of the community and local business owners in the planning process, communities can address their physical needs and learn how to act together. Examples of possible projects include orientation sessions for new families in the neighborhood, community planning for landscaping projects, and community-sponsored classes on safety and self-protection. Developing safe communities programs takes the concept of Neighborhood Watch one step further to neighborhood action, working together to create a safe place for children to grow.

## **6 Encourage the development and availability of parenting programs.**

Numerous community resources exist to encourage and sponsor programs that will help parents gain the skills they need to be their children's first and best teachers. Parents need support and education at all stages of their children's lives, so they can be prepared to help their children meet the challenges they will encounter.

**7 Support recreational activities for young people.**

Youth who are able to spend time in a safe place with healthy activities are less likely to get in trouble with the law. These activities may include the development of community centers and youth centers, participatory sports programs for players of all skill levels or other recreational activities. Communities should look at age-appropriate activities that will meet the broad range of youth interests and needs.

**8 Encourage businesses and civic groups to support or create youth activities.**

Local organizations can support youth activities in a number of ways. For example, they can sponsor youths who may not be able to afford participation in sports or other extracurricular activities; create programs in which teens volunteer time at a business in exchange for fees or equipment required for participation in an activity; or organize activities designed for children and families.

**9 Develop an informational program that promotes the positive actions of youth in local communities.**

Community groups could recognize the accomplishments or contributions of youth who are not typically or otherwise recognized and could encourage the media to do the same. Recognition efforts could be made in conjunction with Montana Teen Day in February, National Youth Service Day in April, Red Ribbon Week in October or in conjunction with any activities that involve youth participation.

**10 Provide youth with opportunities to serve their communities.**

Youths who are involved in their communities are more likely to develop ties to the community and its residents. In turn, they are then less likely to harm people or property to which they feel a connection. Young people also could serve on planning committees for community prevention efforts. Youthful offenders, in particular, should be given the opportunity to make amends to their communities by providing valued service.

**11 Encourage churches to offer services that will assist youth of all ages and to examine the role they can play within the community in addressing youth violence.**

Like schools, churches can be places where children gather for positive activities after school and on weekends. The Task Force encourages churches to look for ways to open their doors to groups that provide positive activities for youth. The Task Force also encourages all churches to offer programs that will provide youths with alternative activities, as well as a support group of peers who can help them deal with issues they are facing.

**12 Encourage senior citizens to take part in community activities and provide opportunities for young people and their elders to work together.**

Children can benefit from strong ties and relationships with grandparents and other older people in their lives. Children who are resilient and able to overcome problems in their lives often do so because they have developed close ties to an older person who offers support and serves as a role model. Senior citizen organizations could offer mentoring and tutoring programs for youth, or individuals could participate in established school or community programs.

*Communities should look at age-appropriate activities that will meet the broad range of youth interests and needs.*

**13 Ensure that agencies at the local level coordinate their services.**

At-risk youths and families could be served in a more comprehensive manner if agencies such as schools, law enforcement, hospitals, county health departments and human services agencies coordinated their efforts to identify those in need of service.

**14 Ensure that state and tribal agencies within communities intervene with at-risk youth as early as possible.**

Research has consistently shown that when children with high-risk behavior or environments are reached at early ages, they have a greater chance of changing those behaviors.

**15 Establish and/or promote community standards that lead to violence prevention and reduction.**

Communities must provide a clear message that respect and courtesy are not just acceptable, but are expected from all members of the community. This courtesy and respect must be exhibited toward all members of a community, across racial, ethnic and socio-economic lines. Intolerance and acceptance of insulting or disrespectful behavior may make it easier for young people to move from verbal attacks to physical attacks. A community can lay the groundwork for violence prevention by establishing clear standards of acceptable behavior, through positive adult role models who display such behavior in their interaction with young people.

**16 Establish programs within communities that allow youths to develop relationships with adults who can offer advice and support.**

Programs that match young people, particularly at-risk youths, with caring adults can reduce the risky behaviors in which they youths may participate. A recent study of one such program, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, showed this nationwide program reduced drug use and school absenteeism by approximately 50 percent.

# JUSTICE SYSTEM



*"The task force heard time and again from Montana's youth that violence was a part of their lives, violence was inevitable and there was nothing anyone could do about it. For adults to accept our youth's assertion that violence is inevitable is tantamount to surrender, and we can never surrender to violence."*

—Craig J. Anderson, Chief Probation Officer, Seventh Judicial District

The justice system is integral to addressing youth violence, for violent acts at their most extreme must result in punishment. The Montana youth justice system — which includes law enforcement, prosecution, sentencing, probation and detention — is in a state of flux. Those involved in the system have agreed that the 1974 law governing juvenile crime, the Youth Court Act, no longer fits the type of crime being committed by juveniles in the 1990s. The 1995 Legislature authorized a study of the juvenile justice system, and lawmakers in 1997 will address a number of recommendations stemming from that study.

The Task Force reviewed information showing that swift and sure sanctions have a greater deterrent effect than do lengthy sentences or imprisonments. In fact, in looking at drug-related offenses, research demonstrates that where there is a decline in adolescent drug use, there also were educational awareness programs, community-based prevention programs and strong parental involvement; drug enforcement policies involving mandatory sentences and stronger sanctions appear to have had very small deterrent effects. While prevention programs take longer and are more difficult to implement, the violence reduction effects of prevention programs are substantially greater and probably cost no more.

In reviewing the role of the justice system in addressing youth violence, the Task Force identified the following strengths, weaknesses and promising strategies.

## Strengths

- Those who work in the system exhibit strong commitment, honesty and integrity.
- Law enforcement is generally successful in identifying and arresting youths who have committed crimes.
- Montana's statutes allow flexibility in the selection of sanctions for youths who have committed crimes.
- Law enforcement has the ability to adapt to the changing needs of communities, through adoption of the community-oriented policing philosophy.
- Montana law allows for the opportunity for offenders to make restitution to their victims or to the community.

## Weaknesses

- The system lacks the capacity to handle the growing numbers of youths committing violent crimes.
- The state lacks adequate secured detention facilities for both male and female juveniles.
- Many communities lack adequate and available victim-offender mediation programs.
- Youth returning from chemical dependency treatment programs lack aftercare services and support for their continued sobriety.
- Many communities are unable to evaluate juveniles when they are first detained, because of a lack of suitable facilities or resources.

- Waiting lists exist for evaluations by mental health professionals.
- Sentencing varies in some judicial districts, resulting in some youths experiencing more lenient treatment than others. This can result in a loss of respect for the system.
- Many youths cannot be routed to the most appropriate treatment because of waiting lists created by the increasing number of youth in need of services and the lack of funds to pay for treatment services.
- Community standards of conduct can seem unclear to youth and others, making it more difficult to generate community support for enforcing laws related to youth. Communities that tolerate youth beer parties, for example, undermine the ability of law enforcement to take action.

## Promising Strategies for the Justice System

(See Appendix E for specific examples)

### 1 Develop more community-based programs for youth who have broken the law.

Judges need additional options for sentencing juveniles who break the law. Most youth who break the law never leave the community. Even those who are determined to need services outside their community will likely return home, so it makes sense to develop programs that allow youth to remain in the community. Programs such as supervised house arrest, community service, or mentoring, for example, allow youthful offenders to remain at home and perhaps continue schooling while fulfilling the terms of their disposition. Community service programs allow lawbreakers to repay the community and provide a way to create and strengthen ties between youth and their community. Youth who succeed in programs that hold them accountable and provide them with new skills may have a greater incentive to not repeat their criminal behavior.

### 2 Provide legal and law enforcement education in the community, through the schools.

Communities, parents and others in the system need to know the capabilities and limitations of the criminal justice system. Such education can benefit individuals and the community by explaining what does happen to children who break the law and by offering opportunities to seek advice on ways the system could be improved.

### 3 Promote the concept of community-oriented policing.

Community oriented policing is a philosophy that embraces the concepts of police/community partnership, problem-solving, accountability, customer-service orientation and empowerment. A community's problems are seen as the responsibility of the whole community, not just the police. Thus community members and law enforcement work together on both traditional and innovative strategies designed to identify and address the conditions that cause crime and disorder. Their efforts focus on permanent solutions rather than on a continuing reaction to the symptoms. The community shares the responsibility with law enforcement for identifying, prioritizing and solving crime-related problems.

**4 Involve justice system professionals in peer mediation and other violence prevention programs.**

Youth can benefit from the knowledge and involvement of people who are familiar with law enforcement and the judicial system. Attorneys, for example, can provide training to schools and students in peer mediation. Judges can speak to classes about the judicial system and the possible sentences young people might face if they break the law.

**5 Support the introduction and wider use of the balanced and restorative justice philosophy.**

This philosophy advocates that each youth entering the justice system be assessed based on the risk he or she poses to the community and how competent he or she is. The philosophy advocates that sanctions be designed to protect the public safety, increase each youth's competency and hold each youth accountable for his or her behavior. Such a philosophy requires the involvement of the community and seeks to change the perception that law enforcement, the courts and corrections officials are responsible for ensuring justice.

When justice breaks down, the offending party has an immediate obligation to "restore" the sense of justice. Communities become involved by providing opportunities for offenders to provide service that is meaningful to both the community and the offender. Community service that allows an offender to become more competent at a skill also makes that youth more employable and less vulnerable to further temptations for criminal behavior.

Restorative justice also seeks to involve crime victims by providing them an opportunity to meet with the offender in the presence of a trained mediator, to describe how the offender's behavior has affected them and to determine an appropriate sanction such as negotiated restitution and/or community service. Offenders who meet their victims become more aware of the harm they have done.

**6 Develop strategic plans for intervention in gang development.**

Many Montana communities — urban, rural and tribal — are seeing fledgling gang activity, much of it related to drugs. Law enforcement professionals, schools, churches, parents and community members must be prepared to deal with gang activity before it becomes a significant problem in their communities.

**7 Train law enforcement on gang activity and intervention.**

Gang "signs" and graffiti are appearing in many communities. While much of this activity is generated locally, some of it is spurred by gang members who are moving into Montana for drug-related and other criminal activities. All gang activity — whether tied to gangs elsewhere or not — is of concern. Law enforcement officials need training to ensure that they will recognize fledgling gangs or groups and know what steps to take to discourage such activity.

*Offenders who  
meet their  
victims become  
more aware of  
the harm they  
have done.*

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION



Because youth violence is a community problem, it is not a problem that law enforcement, families, schools, human services or community programs can remedy by working autonomously. All members of the community must work together in a collaborative effort to reduce violence. This collaboration can occur among organized groups, as well as within neighborhoods.

Community leaders should be at the forefront of bringing this issue to their community's attention. They have the ability to convene community forums, to call on existing groups to assist in the effort, or to form a council if no such group exists that could devote its attention to youth violence issues. Such leadership would encourage communities to focus on their youth, to look at the resources they have available for youth and the resources they should develop, and to select the strategies community members believe would best serve their youth, given the community's needs, history and culture.

The Task Force heard testimony from several people on collaborative efforts already occurring throughout the state. Speakers included Hank Hudson, administrator of the Division of Family Services for the Department of Public Health and Human Services; Kate Mrgudic, program manager of the Partnership to Strengthen Families at DPHHS; and Karin Olsen-Billings, director of the Summit Project.

As a result of this testimony and the materials it reviewed, the Task Force identified community collaboration as the top priority in an effective program to stop youth violence.

The importance of community collaboration in prevention efforts also has been noted by the state's Interagency Coordinating Council for Prevention (ICC), which is made up of the Attorney General; Superintendent of Public Instruction; directors of the Department of Public Health and Human Ser-

vices, Department of Labor and Industry, and the Montana Crime Control Division; and representatives of the Children's Trust Fund, Havre HELP and the Billings Council of the Montana Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

The ICC offered a grant to encourage communities to propose collaborative prevention programs, and awarded its first grant to Missoula for a proposal entitled *Beyond Violence: Toward a Healthy Community*. This pilot project will combine several resources in Missoula to concentrate efforts on reducing youth violence at C.S. Porter Middle School. Missoula's proposal was based on the belief that effective prevention requires: community response; integration of alternative activities with affective, cognitive and social approaches; cooperation within and among entities in the community; and the same sophisticated training in organizational management that any professional organization requires to be successful.

Beginning in August 1996, the Missoula project started to identify risk factors for students and to foster protective factors designed to lead to positive outcomes for the students. For example, because low neighborhood attachment is seen as a risk factor for youth, programs will be designed to involve youth in their community even if they are there for a short time. Community involvement then leads to an increased sense of belonging and a clearer sense of the youth's place in the community.

Programs such as this provide for the multifaceted and long-term approach that the Youth Violence Task Force saw as essential to fighting youth violence.

In discussing the role of community collaboration in addressing youth violence, the Task Force identified the following promising strategies for successful collaboration, based on "Collaboration—What Makes It Work" by Dr. Paul W. Mattesich.

*Community involvement leads to an increased sense of belonging and a clearer sense of the youth's place in the community.*

## **Promising Strategies for Effective Community Collaboration**

### **1 Identify individuals who can serve as community conveners.**

In some communities, a group or groups may already exist that would bring people together to discuss youth violence issues. In others, key community leaders may want to organize a group to begin the discussion. Communities should begin the process of devising strategies for reducing youth violence by holding public forums to discuss the issue.

### **2 Evaluate the levels of youth violence that exist.**

In addressing youth violence, each community must look at the kinds of crimes juveniles are committing and other violent behavior they are exhibiting. Through an evaluation of its existing problems and its current ability to respond to them, a community will be better prepared to select strategies that promise the best results for its youth.

### **3 Encourage groups with a history of success in the community to collaborate.**

Successful programs have high name recognition and are seen as credible resources in the community. They also are viewed as leaders within the community and generally have the support of community residents. Bringing these existing groups together to work on one program can provide immediate community acceptance for the new effort.

### **4 Involve a wide variety of members in the collaborative effort.**

Many groups face a reduction in resources, so cooperative efforts make sense from a financial perspective. However, collaboration also provides other benefits. An appropriate cross-section of members will provide any collaborative effort with many perspectives, creating a clearer picture of the problem. By including community leaders as members, the effort is likely to have greater financial and political support.

### **5 Develop a structure that includes all members in decision making.**

If participants in a collaborative effort are to feel they have a part in reducing youth violence, they should have a stake in both the process and the outcome. Every member agency, community leader or citizen group that is involved should be part of the decision-making process. The development of clear roles and policy guidelines enables groups to work together without becoming bogged down in the process.

### **6 Develop effective communication systems.**

Open and frequent communication among partners in community collaboration provides for clear understanding between groups. The establishment of formal and informal communication links can help groups bond together. Several community groups in Montana meet at a set time every month. For informal meetings, many meet over breakfast at the same time and place each month.

### **7 Establish a clear sense of purpose.**

It is important that collaborators establish concrete, attainable goals and objectives. A shared vision allows the group to work together in a common effort; many collaborative groups have dissolved from a lack of clear purpose. Establishing a clear purpose also enables the group to measure its success.

**8 Secure sufficient resources for the project.**

To be successful, a collaborative project needs sufficient resources and commitment from its community. It also needs enough members to carry out the planned projects. Volunteers should be kept involved and informed, so they maintain a high level of interest in the project. A skilled facilitator can hold a group together and provide for the development of a shared vision and bond within the collaborating agencies.

**9 Encourage communities to be aware of and use the Interagency Coordinating Council.**

The ICC has a prevention resource center, which is coordinating efforts with state agencies and communities on five key issues: increasing the percentage of high school graduates who are ready to move on to advanced learning, training or employment; reducing the rate of crime and violence; reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect; reducing the rate of unhealthy or unintended pregnancies; and raising the initial age of use of alcohol and other drugs, as well as increasing abstinence and reducing the incidence of adolescent drug and alcohol use.

## SPECIAL CONCERNS

# GANGS, GUNS, ALCOHOL AND DRUGS



During its study, the Task Force came to realize that certain factors were interwoven in all aspects of youth violence. It has identified as special concerns the development of gang activity, the wide availability of guns and the use of alcohol and drugs by juveniles in Montana.

Each of these issues plays a role in violent activity by youth. The creation of local gangs and the movement of some out-of-state gangs into Montana has changed the nature of youth crime in some areas. Handguns were involved in 80 percent of the deaths attributed to youth during the year-long period the Task Force met. And the use of alcohol and other drugs is often a factor in the crimes young people commit; these drugs can lower a youth's normal inhibitions against committing a crime, while drug addictions can prompt youth to commit crimes to support a habit. In addition, federal sentencing guidelines and harsh sentences for adults involved in the drug trade have increased the number of youth who are recruited into the drug trafficking system.

Effective strategies for dealing with these issues cannot be broken down simply as something that must be provided by families, or schools, or communities, or the criminal justice system. Instead, strategies must be present at all these levels. Something as simple as spending family time together can give children the support they might otherwise seek from gangs. But communities, as well, must show their resistance to gang signs and graffiti, and law enforcement officers must be aware of the signs of fledgling gang activity so they can stop it before it becomes more pervasive. A similar cohesive effort is needed to address alcohol and drug use. Families and communities must set clear standards, schools must provide education, and the criminal justice system must respond to alcohol and drug use with clear sanctions and effective treatment programs.

*Gangs, guns, alcohol and drugs all play a role in violent activity by youth.*

## Gangs

Most Montanans consider gang activity a phenomenon that has not yet touched Montana. Stories of drive-by shootings and young children recruited to run drugs for gangs remain tales that we hear from other areas. But law enforcement officials around Montana are aware of budding gang activity, in communities large and small.

- The Billings Police Department undertook a gang assessment in the summer of 1996. It found gang members with affiliations to about 17 different out-of-state gangs and estimated that 150 to 200 youths are either involved in gangs or at risk for joining in gang activity. Violence attributed to these gang members included stabbings, shootings and assaults.
- In 1995, Missoula authorities attributed several assaults to a gang whose members one deputy county attorney said "appear to perform random acts of violence based on their moods at the moment." Authorities also arrested 30 suspected gang members on drug charges; the group included gang members who had moved from Los Angeles and Spokane. The undercover investigation also assisted local authorities in solving drive-by shootings that had occurred in Missoula and showed that the suspects had sold weapons, many of them stolen.
- In October 1996, the small towns of Ronan and Townsend took up concerns related to gangs. In Ronan, three girls — aged 11 to 14 — had been raped in what one said was an initiation ritual for gang members. And in Townsend, people concerned about drinking, drugs and the behavior of some teenagers brought up the issue at a City Council meeting and planned further community meetings to address the issue.

Young people affiliate with gangs to obtain a sense of belonging and status. The best defense against gangs is to provide for those needs through strong communities that value their children.

## Guns

The Task Force realizes that gun possession and use is a politically charged issue. The right to bear arms is treasured by hunters, and generations of Montanans have passed the tradition of hunting on to their children.

However, the divisive nature of this issue should not preclude discussion of it — in our communities and in our state Legislature. The paramount concern in any discussion should be the safety of our children and our communities.

Nationwide, the number of firearm fatalities among youth has increased sharply. According to a 1994 U.S. Department of Justice report, nearly 50,000 children and teens were killed by guns between 1979 and 1991. And guns now account for 82 percent of the murders committed by juveniles.

In December 1995, the Critical Illness and Trauma Foundation released a report saying firearm injuries were the second leading cause of death for Montana children from 1989 to 1992. Homicides, suicides and unintentional gunshot wounds were included in the tally.

In the one-year period the Task Force met, juveniles were charged in nine deaths. Guns were used in seven of the deaths, and at least two of these fatal shootings involved stolen guns.

A number of other crimes, ranging from non-fatal shootings to robberies, involved firearms.

Students also have brought guns to schools. The Office of Public Instruction says 12 schools reported violations of the Gun-Free Schools Act during the 1995-96 year. Nineteen students were expelled as a result of the violations.

Clearly, Montanans cannot afford to look the other way simply because limiting gun possession or use is a politically sensitive issue.

## Alcohol and Other Drugs

Law enforcement officers and the courts are aware of the clear link between crime and the use of alcohol and other drugs. In general, the more seriously a youth is involved with drugs, the more serious is his or her involvement in delinquency, as well.

A U.S. Department of Justice study in 1995 noted that one in three juveniles who were detained by law enforcement officers was under the influence of drugs at the time of his or her offense. Because alcohol and many other drugs reduce inhibitions, juveniles may lose their fear of committing a crime while they are under the influence. In addition, people who are addicted to drugs often commit crimes to obtain money to support their addictions.

Statistics also show a strong relationship between alcohol and domestic violence. A 1993 report in *Alcohol Health and Research World* concluded that alcohol was a factor in more than 50 percent of all reported domestic violence cases.

The *Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey* compiled by the Office of Public Instruction shows that in 1995, 58 percent of Montana youth reported using alcohol at least once in the 30 days before they were surveyed, while 84 percent said they had had at least one drink in their lifetime. Another 20 percent reported they had used marijuana at least once in the past 30 days, while 35 percent reported smoking marijuana at least once. The survey shows that these drugs are widely available to and used by Montana's youth.

In discussing these special concerns, the Task Force identified the following promising strategies for communities to consider.

*Montanans cannot afford to look the other way simply because limiting gun possession or use is a politically sensitive issue.*

## **Promising Strategies on Gangs, Guns and Drugs**

### **1 Educate parents, teachers and communities on signs of gang activity.**

If parents and communities are aware of the kinds of activities and behaviors that signal gang activity, they will have a greater chance of stopping such activity before it has a chance to take hold.

### **2 Strictly enforce policies against guns and weapons in schools.**

Our schools can be safe only when they are weapon-free. While some students may feel they need weapons to defend themselves, the mere presence of a weapon makes a situation less safe — not more so.

### **3 Raise the issue within communities of limiting children's access to weapons, particularly illegal weapons.**

Law enforcement officers around the state are aware of the wide availability of an array of weapons, including stolen handguns and sawed-off shotguns. Local governments should consider establishing limits on the possession and use of weapons by juveniles. Communities need to discuss and work with state legislators on the appropriate age for juveniles to possess weapons. State law currently allows children ages 14 and older to possess handguns and use weapons without adult supervision. Children under 14 may carry or use firearms if they are accompanied by a parent or guardian or supervised by a gun safety instructor or other authorized adult.

### **4 Strive to educate gun owners on responsible storage and handling of guns.**

Law enforcement officials recommend that firearms always be unloaded and locked up when not in use and that bullets be stored and locked in a separate location. Given the number of accidental injuries by firearms and the number of intentional injuries inflicted by stolen firearms, gun owners must take steps to secure firearms when they are not in use.

### **5 Provide effective and long-term drug and alcohol resistance education.**

Through education, students can be made aware of the effects of alcohol and other drug use, the risks associated with such use, and successful strategies for resisting peer pressure to drink or use drugs.

### **6 Provide a continuum of in-patient treatment, out-patient treatment and aftercare in drug and alcohol treatment programs for youth and their families.**

A full array of services must be available to provide the most effective treatment for people with alcohol and other drug abuse problems. These programs should serve not only the individual with the problem, but also the entire family so that family members learn about the assistance and support they can give.

### **7 Require drug and alcohol education or treatment programs as a part of criminal sentencing.**

Because alcohol and drug use are linked so closely with crime, the justice system must require treatment for youths with alcohol and drug problems and make sure such treatment programs are available.

### **8 Support state funding of in-patient alcohol and drug treatment for youths.**

The Task Force supports the recommendation of the Juvenile Justice and Mental Health Study Commission for a \$200,000 increase in state funding for chemical dependency treatment for youths during fiscal years 1998 and 1999.

# VIOLENT CRIMES INVOLVING YOUTH

SEPTEMBER 21, 1995 – SEPTEMBER 27, 1996



Following is a listing of violent incidents involving youth that were reported in the state's major daily newspapers from the time the Task Force on Youth Violence held its first meeting in September 1995 until it concluded its work in September 1996. The list cannot be considered complete because it covers only those incidents that were reported in the news.

The Task Force also was well aware of the violence we don't see — the private violence in families, involving spouses, partners or children; peer violence; and child neglect. Knowing of the underreporting of acts of violence in Montana, Task Force members still were appalled and profoundly affected by the amount and levels of violence that did receive coverage in Montana newspapers during their brief time together.

## October 11

Five Great Falls girls beat a 16-year-old girl and carved Roman numerals into her abdomen before leaving her outside of town, naked.

## October 14

An 18-year-old Missoula youth was arrested for allegedly beating another man at a gas station. The victim suffered a broken jaw and required surgery. Later that same night, five people — including two juveniles — were arrested after they broke into a home and bound, beat and used a stun gun on a 17-year-old who lived there.

Police said all of those involved in the assaults were members of a gang that calls itself the North Side Crips and — in the words of a deputy county attorney — “appear to perform random acts of violence based on their moods at the moment.”

## October 16

A Havre Middle School student brought a knife to school and nicked a fellow student in the neck.

## October 20

Two juvenile boys in Missoula stopped their car to assault a 13-year-old, who spent two days in the hospital as a result of the attack. His assailants apparently didn't like his long hair.

## October 20

A 14-year-old Stevensville girl was beaten by five girls after telling her mother that she and others had used methamphetamine.

## October 25

A 14-year-old Billings boy fatally shot his girlfriend, apparently after she told him she wanted to break up with him.

## October 26

Two Billings youths — ages 12 and 15 — confessed to stabbing a 27-year-old man who caught them trying to break into his car. The victim was hospitalized.

## October 31

A 15-year-old Butte boy was arrested on suspicion of assaulting a 73-year-old man and trying to force his way into another home. The youth said he had taken LSD.

## November 7

Three 16-year-olds beat and robbed a pizza delivery person in Missoula, after placing a phony order.

## November 18

A 17-year-old Anaconda boy was arrested after fatally shooting a 14-year-old boy as he sat in a car outside the youth's home.

**November 26**

Two youths beat and robbed an 11-year-old Helena boy who was walking home from school.

**December 7**

A 15-year-old Bozeman boy stabbed a fellow student at a private school. The 16-year-old victim suffered stab wounds and was hospitalized because of the injuries he sustained in the attack. Court documents showed the assailant had a history of violent attacks on fellow students before the stabbing occurred.

**December 13**

A 17-year-old Helena youth was arrested for allegedly robbing the Montana City Store at gunpoint on December 11.

**December 21**

A 15-year-old Kalispell girl was ordered to stand trial as an adult for deliberate homicide. Accused of poisoning a two-year-old she was babysitting by giving him an overdose of codeine and forcing him to drink PineSol cleaner, she pleaded guilty to the crime on January 11.

**December 25**

The Critical Illness and Trauma Foundation released a report saying that firearm injuries were the second leading cause of death for Montana children from 1989 to 1992. The injuries included homicide, suicide and unintentional gunshot wounds.

**December 28**

A 17-year-old Missoula girl died after suffering head injuries when her 22-year-old boyfriend beat her.

**January 9**

An 18-year-old Missoula man was wounded by two young men in an incident that authorities say had "gang overtones." Two 18-year-olds and a 17-year-old were later arrested in connection with the shooting.

**January 12**

Three Butte teenagers were charged in connection with the armed robbery of a Butte casino.

**January 12**

A 17-year-old Helena boy pleaded guilty to robbing a convenience store in December, using a pistol to demand cash and spraying the clerk with Mace.

**January 21**

Two Billings teens — ages 13 and 14 — were arrested for allegedly using a pistol to threaten a man.

**January 23**

Havre school officials confirmed that a middle school student was expelled for allegedly attempting to hire classmates to kill a teacher who had disciplined him. The youth allegedly offered to provide a handgun that could be used to shoot the teacher.

**January 26**

Great Falls police arrested a 17-year-old and a 23-year-old in the stabbing and beating death of a Great Falls man.

**January 27**

The *Billings Gazette* reported that three elementary school students received short-term suspensions from school for bringing weapons — a pocketknife and throwing stars — to school.

**February 4**

Yellowstone County deputies arrested a 17-year-old Billings Heights boy who allegedly shot and wounded his parents following an argument.

**February 15**

A 12-year-old Billings girl was charged with felony possession of dangerous drugs for taking cocaine to school. According to officials for Billings School District 2, there was no evidence that the girl had used the drugs or had attempted to sell them.

**February 15**

Helena police arrested a 17-year-old and an 18-year-old in connection with a robbery of the Pop Inn in Helena.

**February 17**

Helena police arrested two of four juveniles who allegedly refused to pay a cab driver and instead used an X-acto knife to threaten him.

**February 22**

Bozeman authorities arrested, at gunpoint, a 17-year-old boy and a 20-year-old man who allegedly bound a clerk and threatened her with a knife during a robbery at a sporting goods store.

**February 23**

A Great Falls high school student was arrested and charged with misdemeanor assault for allegedly striking two teachers while serving time in detention.

**February 24**

The *Missoulian* reported that an 18-year-old Missoula youth was arrested after allegedly chasing three motel employees with a running chain saw after they caught him rifling through items in the employees' break room.

**February 24**

Shots were fired in what Great Falls police said was a gang incident. Police said several juveniles in a car were attacked by about 30 other young adults, who beat on the car with baseball bats and metal pipes. The shots were fired when the juveniles in the car drove away; police recovered a bullet fragment from a seat in the car.

**March 1**

The Silver Bow County Attorney's Office filed a request to have robbery charges against two boys, ages 14 and 15, moved to adult court. The two allegedly robbed a convenience store in February and threatened the clerk.

**March 4**

The *Great Falls Tribune* reported that two youths, ages 14 and 15, had recently grabbed and threatened to choke or break the neck of an employee of the Cascade County Youth Services Center while they were detained there.

**March 12**

Parents of middle school students in Anaconda attended a meeting to discuss bullying and intimidation at the school. Parents learned that one girl was arrested for disorderly conduct after starting a fight a block away from school and that one person was injured badly enough in a fight to be hospitalized.

**March 21**

Missoula police arrested two youths, ages 19 and 16, after an armed robbery at a Missoula motel.

**March 25**

A 15-year-old Great Falls youth was fatally shot in the head with a handgun. A 16-year-old youth was suspected of the shooting.

**April 23**

Billings authorities arrested a 16-year-old boy in the shooting death of a convenience store clerk earlier in the day.

**April 25**

A 14-year-old Great Falls girl was arrested in the shooting death of her father.

**April 25**

Six youths, ages 13 to 15, were sentenced to state custody for allegedly luring a 14-year-old girl into a home, holding her against her will and beating her.

**April 26**

Two 19-year-old Butte men were sentenced to 10 years each at the Swan River Boot Camp after pleading guilty to robbing a casino in November 1995. The two threatened casino employees with a knife and a handgun during the robbery. An 18-year-old earlier pleaded guilty to driving the getaway car.

**May 3**

Two Great Falls eighth-graders were suspended after one brought a loaded gun to school and the other pointed it at another student. Both boys were later expelled for the next school year.

**May 9**

Officials at a Billings middle school discovered that students were passing around a loaded .22-caliber pistol at school. Six students were suspended for allegedly handling the weapon, which had been stolen.

**May 11**

The *Great Falls Tribune* reported that a 14-year-old boy was charged with two counts of sexual intercourse without consent, for allegedly raping two younger girls.

**May 11**

A 16-year-old Belt boy was charged with three counts of sexual assault for allegedly molesting a young girl on the school bus in March.

**May 12**

A 15-year-old girl who allegedly used an axe to break into the guesthouse of a Victor residence was shot and wounded by the homeowner after she attacked him when he came to investigate the break-in.

**May 13**

Billings police arrested a 17-year-old boy who was wanted on a California warrant for a gang-related shooting that injured three people in September 1995. The boy had been a fugitive since the arrest warrant was issued in October.

**June 5**

Great Falls authorities arrested a 17-year-old in connection with the armed robbery of a restaurant in May.

**June 10**

Missoula County authorities filed a charge of attempted murder against an 18-year-old, who was accused of trying to run over two other teens — one who was on foot and one who was riding a bike.

**June 19**

Missoula authorities arrested a 14-year-old in the shooting death of a 57-year-old man, who had caught the youth stealing cigarettes from his vehicle.

**June 20**

Two preschoolers, ages 4 and 5, were suspected of pouring bleach, ammonia, detergent, foods and other materials on a disabled Hamilton woman after entering her apartment. The boys allegedly hid the woman's cane, and she was unable to leave her wheelchair as they ransacked her apartment and assaulted her.

**June 24**

Great Falls police arrested two 15-year-old boys who allegedly stole a car and then led authorities on a high-speed chase, through residential areas, in which speeds reached 90 mph.

**June 27**

A Bigfork youth confessed to kidnapping and repeatedly raping a woman who had given him a ride home from a party in October. The youth, who was 17 at the time, tied the woman up and locked her in the trunk of her car.

**July 11**

Billings authorities arrested a 17-year-old boy for allegedly stabbing another man during a fight in a parking lot, puncturing the man's lung. The youth reportedly was with a number of other juveniles who approached the victim and his friends.

**July 11**

Lake County authorities arrested a 10-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl who were accused of holding down and robbing an 85-year-old man after throwing water on him and breaking dishes in his home.

**July 14**

A 16-year-old Billings boy was arrested in the shooting death of a 15-year-old acquaintance. A stolen gun was used in the shooting; the 16-year-old said he was merely trying to wake his friend by cocking the pistol near his head, when it accidentally discharged.

**July 21**

Authorities arrested an 18-year-old Minnesota youth near Plentywood after he led them on a high-speed chase and fired several shots before surrendering to authorities. A Plentywood police officer originally had tried to stop the teen after discovering the car he was driving had been stolen.

**August 19**

The mother of a 4-year-old boy filed a report with the Gallatin County Sheriff's Office alleging that her son was assaulted by a 12-year-old girl on Memorial Day.

**August 20**

Carbon County authorities arrested four Ohio youths who took a Fromberg family hostage for about eight hours, after fleeing from authorities who wanted to question them about the stolen car they were driving.

**August 24**

A 26-year-old Great Falls man was stabbed outside a gas station, and witnesses said three or four juveniles were responsible for the attack. The man suffered a punctured lung.

**September 9**

Helena police arrested two teenagers, ages 14 and 18, who allegedly threw an object at a patrol car and then scuffled with police when the officers stopped the car.

# PROMISING STRATEGIES

## FAMILIES

### 4 Promote the positive use of TV and other forms of media.

- The Montana chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has prepared a list of TV tips for parents, based on a publication issued by the American Medical Association.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-455-5315
- TV-Free America provides information and promotional materials to communities interested in developing activities for a TV-free week in April.  
Headquarters: Washington, D.C.  
Phone: 202-887-0436

### 6 Provide parenting skills training for parents of all ages.

- County Extension agents offer a Developing Capable People class that teaches skills for dealing effectively with life. The class is currently offered in 20 different counties.  
Coordinator Location: Bozeman  
Phone: 406-994-3501
- The Browning school district's Parenting Center provides ongoing education and parenting education, as well as parent advocacy and family literacy training. It also has a family resource center and a home visitor service for students at high risk.  
Location: Browning  
Phone: 406-338-2715
- The Poplar school district is establishing an anti-drug and anti-violence initiative that emphasizes parental involvement in children's education and includes parenting classes and family-oriented activities at the school.  
Location: Poplar  
Contact: 406-768-3408

### 7 Encourage families to use services that reduce family violence and victimization.

- The Montana Board of Crime Control works closely with victims' assistance and domestic violence prevention and shelter programs throughout the state. The Board has state-wide listings for shelters and assistance programs.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-3604.
- The Montana Law Enforcement Academy has hired a staff person to train law enforcement officers in domestic violence issues.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-458-2070

### 8 Encourage youth and families to learn about creating a healthy environment.

- The Montana 4-H Program offers a variety of programs that teach youth and families about healthy lifestyles.  
Location: Bozeman  
Phone: 406-994-3501

- Healthy Mother, Healthy Babies is a coalition that provides information and services for at-risk pregnancies and children.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-449-8611
- The Partnership to Strengthen Families is a statewide network of private and public family services providers that seeks to help families develop their own strength. Services provided by partnership agencies include: identifying family strengths; teaching appropriate parenting, budgeting, housekeeping and financial skills; assisting families in meeting their medical needs; and referring families to needed services.  
Coordinator Headquarters: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-6553
- Head Start provides comprehensive, family-based services in the areas of human services, health and nutrition, special programs for children with disabilities, parent involvement, preschool education, transportation, and mental health services for children and parents. Montana has 20 Head Start programs, including seven tribal programs.  
Location: Throughout the state  
Phone: Check local listings
- The Early Childhood Parent Teacher Association in Great Falls provides “fun, support and a sense of community to children 0-6 and the people who love them.” The group’s yearly calendar features monthly events for families with young children. The association is affiliated with the Montana PTA but not with any particular school.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-454-2887

## **9 Promote foster/adoptive/extended families.**

- The Montana Adoption Resource Center provides information about adoption and referral services to birth families and adopted children hoping to learn more about each other.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-449-3266
- The Montana Adoption Resource Center’s “Families for Kids” project aims to create permanent homes for children who have been in foster care for more than two years. Through a three-year Kellogg Grant, the project provides training for prospective parents and for social workers in preparing children for adoption.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-449-3266
- The Casey Family Program provides long-term foster care services for youth who cannot return to their birth families. Its services include family training and support, tutoring and life skills development.  
Location: Missoula  
Phone: 406-543-3632

## **10 Adopt family-friendly policies in the work place.**

- The State of Montana offers its employees flexible scheduling and job-sharing opportunities that allow them to meet personal needs. State personnel policies are available from the Department of Administration.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-3871

# PROMISING STRATEGIES

## SCHOOLS

### 1 Institute programs that help students and teachers learn how to deal with and change problem behavior.

- The Montana Behavioral Initiative, offered by the Office of Public Instruction, provides teachers with strategies for responding to challenging behaviors and for teaching their students social skills. The program also is designed to help teachers coordinate family and community resources for students with complex behavioral needs.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-4429
- The Second Step curriculum is designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior among children, increase appropriate social behaviors and build self esteem. Some Billings elementary schools have adopted this curriculum.  
Headquarters: Seattle, WA  
Phone: 1-800-634-4449
- The Peer Patrol at Margaret Leary School, made up of students in grades 3 through 6, is designed to help children resolve simple conflicts. Conflict management and peer-to-peer-counseling have been effective in many areas. Participating students have demonstrated improved listening and communication skills and the ability to solve problems.  
Location: Butte  
Phone: 406-496-2100
- The Respect and Manners program at Eagle Cliffs Elementary School emphasizes the conduct the school expects students to exhibit at all times in all areas of the school. The expectations include respecting differences, using polite voice tones, holding doors, using appropriate body language with adults and avoiding threats, harassment, put-downs and bullying. The principal discusses one of the expected behaviors with students each week, and the expectations also are posted throughout the school.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-255-3840
- Character Counts provides students with the opportunity to talk about what they need from themselves, peers, parents, adults and their communities to build good character. Students identify the problems they face and help develop solutions. Character Counts is a statewide partnership involving the Office of Public Instruction, the Parent-Teacher-Student Association and the Montana Broadcasters Association.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-3168

### 2 Open schools after regular hours for healthy, planned activities.

- Riverside Middle School in Billings allows Saturday night activities at the school, including sports, music, games and movies. Students establish the rules that must be followed to participate in the activities.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-255-3740

- The School-Aged Child Care Program in Helena uses schools for child care programs after regular school hours and during school vacations. Children in the program use school facilities and are supervised while their parents are at work.

Location: Helena

Phone: 406-447-8916

### **3 Encourage efforts to create resilient children.**

- The Help One Student to Succeed (HOSTS) program matches adult volunteers with students who need assistance with reading or other academic skills. The volunteers work from instructional packets designed specifically for their assigned student. This nationally designed program is used in a number of Montana schools.

Headquarters: Vancouver, WA

Phone: 1-800-833-4678

- The Child Advancement Project, a partnership between Prevent Child Abuse and the Bozeman School District, matches at-risk children with adult mentors to help them gain and/or maintain academic and social skills. It also places a parent liaison in the schools, to encourage parental involvement and provide support to parents.

Location: Bozeman

Phone: 406-587-3840

- Peanut Butter Pals matches Montana State University students with Hawthorne School students. The "pals" have one-on-one meetings once a week during the lunch hour. The program is designed to emphasize peer relationships, rather than academic matters.

Location: Bozeman

Phone: 406-585-1590

### **5 Develop interagency councils to coordinate identification and intervention efforts on behalf of youth in need of services.**

- The Inter-Agency Task Force in Butte is made up of representatives from a variety of agencies that work with troubled youth. The Task Force discusses problems that families throughout the community are experiencing and tries to develop a plan to assist those families. The member agencies also share information, as allowed, about the families they are serving.

Location: Butte

Phone: 406-496-2000

- In Helena, representatives from the school district, law enforcement, group homes, mental health services, family services and the juvenile probation office meet weekly to share information on the children with whom they are working.

Location: Helena

Contact: 406-447-8228

### **6 Hire school resource officers to work in conjunction with local law enforcement.**

- The Great Falls school district has two police officers who work primarily on truancy issues. The officers make home visits, bring students to schools and write citations when necessary. They also help schools experiencing problems such as thefts, fights or alcohol and drug use.

Location: Great Falls

Phone: 406-791-2196

## **7 Encourage efforts for students that teach awareness of racial, cultural and socio-economic issues.**

- Hellgate High School students in Missoula formed a group known as R.E.S.P.E.C.T (Respect Encourages Special People to Experience Cultural Togetherness) that has discussed violence-related issues and intolerance. Its has sponsored a "Diversity Week" designed to raise awareness of the ways in which different groups of people often are treated.  
Location: Missoula  
Phone: 406-728-2402
- The Piegan Institute re-introduces young schoolchildren to tribal language and history, to increase their self-image. Children are taught in one-room schools in a low-stress atmosphere.  
Location: Browning  
Phone: 406-338-7440

## **8 Develop policies that deal with problem behavior and crises.**

- The Billings school district's Crisis Procedure Manual details how to handle situations ranging from an earthquake to a gunman in the building. The manual covers situations that occur during the school day, as well as on evenings and weekends, and delineates the duties of school staff members.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-255-3500
- The Great Falls school district is revising its manual that outlines how to handle crisis situations.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-791-2350

## **9 Encourage schools to work with parents in addressing disruptive behavior.**

- The Billings School District has asked parents and students to sign a "weapons contract" in which parents agree to teach their children about weapons and to keep weapons away from them, while students agree not to bring weapons to school.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 255-3500

# PROMISING STRATEGIES

## COMMUNITIES

### 1 Hold community meetings and conferences to focus attention on youth-related issues and to motivate action toward solutions.

- A Helena middle school held an informational meeting on gang awareness, to educate parents and community members on the status of gang activity in Montana and ways to prevent it in Helena.  
Location: C.R. Anderson Middle School  
Phone: 406-447-8898
- The International Chiefs of Police has published recommendations for ways communities can address youth violence.  
Location: Alexandria, VA  
Phone: 1-800-843-4227

### 2 Create community crisis centers with trained professionals.

- The Montana Board of Crime Control works with victims' assistance programs throughout the state. Information is available by calling 406-444-3604.

### 3 Create opportunities for prevention groups to work together.

- The Community Crime Prevention Council in Billings is made up of several programs designed to prevent crime, educate residents on crime-related issues, and assist victims. The council encourages consolidation of efforts where appropriate.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-259-4869
- The Alliance for Youth is a network of more than 50 individuals, organizations and programs concerned with high-risk behaviors by youth. The alliance seeks to enhance coordination between parents, youth, service providers and schools to provide a comprehensive community prevention effort. It also promotes activities for youth and involves youth in prevention and education efforts.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-452-9824

### 4 Reduce the factors that encourage crime.

- The City of Great Falls has used federal funds to conduct Operation Paintbrush, in which low- to moderate-low income homeowners receive grants to cover the costs of painting their homes. The project is designed to beautify neighborhoods and encourage the upkeep of homes.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-771-1180

### 6 Support recreational activities for youth.

- Boys & Girls Clubs of America is a non-profit organization designed to serve youth from disadvantaged circumstances by providing professionally staffed and fully equipped facilities with daily programs. The organization has clubs in Billings, Red Lodge and Browning in Montana.  
Headquarters Location: Atlanta, GA  
Phone: 404-815-5700

## **8 Encourage businesses/civic groups to support or create youth activities.**

- The Friends of the Library organization in Bozeman has planned and promoted a Turn Off the TV Week, during which games and other alternative activities are provided.  
Location: Bozeman  
Phone: 406-582-2404
- The Helena Rotary Club donates money to help low-income children in area elementary and middle schools. The donations are used not only for clothing and school supplies, but also for covering the costs of field trips or other activities for children in need.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-449-1070
- TV-Free America provides information and promotional materials to communities interested in developing activities for a TV-free week in April.  
Headquarters: Washington, D.C.  
Phone: 202-887-0436

## **12 Encourage senior citizens to take part in community activities that match them with children.**

- The Foster Grandparent Program places senior citizens in a variety of settings, including day care centers and schools. Missoula, Billings, Great Falls and Helena operate programs in their counties and some adjoining areas.  
Phone: 406-447-1680

## **15 Establish and/or promote community standards that lead to violence prevention and reduction.**

- In Billings, a group known as Care (courtesy and respect empower) promotes a philosophy of respect and courtesy as a means of addressing the earliest stages of violence: put-downs, insults and bullying. It has developed a process for schools and for families that is designed to create awareness, set expectations and recognize positive behavior. The group hopes to expand its efforts to community businesses and groups.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-259-4869
- The Respect and Manners program at Eagle Cliffs Elementary School emphasizes the conduct the school expects students to exhibit at all times in all areas of the school. The expectations include respecting differences, holding doors, using appropriate body language with adults and avoiding threats, harassment, put-downs and bullying. The principal discusses one of the expected behaviors with students each week, and the expectations also are posted throughout the school.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-255-3840
- Character Counts provides students with the opportunity to talk about what they need from themselves, peers, parents, adults and their communities to build good character. Students identify the problems they face and help develop solutions. Character Counts is a statewide partnership involving the Office of Public Instruction, the Parent-Teacher-Student Association and the Montana Broadcasters Association.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-3168

# PROMISING STRATEGIES

## JUSTICE SYSTEM

### 1 Develop more community-based programs for youth who have broken the law.

- The Community Accountability, Retention and Diversion Program in Helena works with juvenile offenders who would otherwise be committed to an institution. During the day, the youths attend an alternative school at which they continue their school work and do community service. They must wear uniforms and are monitored by TV cameras while at the school. After school hours, they are under house arrest. The program is designed to limit their activities while giving them an opportunity to remain in the community and repay the community through service efforts.

Location: Helena

Contact: 406-447-8228

### 2 Provide legal and law enforcement education in the community, through the schools.

- Several communities offer an Adopt A Cop program in which a law enforcement officer volunteers to drop in to a school several times a year to put a friendly face on law enforcement and talk with students about law enforcement issues.
- Law-related education courses combine civics, government and the law in participatory classes for all grade levels. The curriculum teaches students to be effective, law-abiding and participating citizens.

Several national groups offer law-related education courses and information:

National Law-Related Education Resource Center: 312-988-5735

Center for Civic Education: 1-800-350-4223

Constitutional Rights Foundation: 213-487-5590

The NICEL Clearinghouse: 202-546-6644

- The Indian Law-Related Education Model Curriculum was developed by the Montana Office of Public Instruction to bring the teaching of civics and the law, as it pertains to American Indians, into a school's curriculum. The curriculum has been made available to all Montana school libraries and is available through the Office of Public Instruction.

Location: Helena

Phone: 406-444-3095

### 3 Promote the concept of community oriented policing.

- The Montana Board of Crime Control provides training in the community policing philosophy.

Location: Helena

Phone: 406-444-3604

- The Billings Police Department has adopted community policing and its efforts have included opening an office staffed with volunteers from the community.

Location: Billings

Phone: 406-657-8200

- The Butte-Silver Bow Sheriff's Office has added three community policing officers to its staff.

Location: Butte

Phone: 406-782-4224

#### **4 Involve justice system professionals in peer mediation programs**

- The Indiana State Bar Association and the Indiana Attorney General's Office have developed an alternative dispute resolution program in which attorneys from both groups have trained students as conflict managers and mediators. The program involves teachers, as well.  
Location: Indianapolis, IN  
Phone: 317-232-6201
- The American Bar Association has developed an information packet for people wishing to create programs in which lawyers become involved in peer mediation programs in schools.  
Headquarters Location: Washington, D.C.  
Phone: 202-662-1687

#### **5 Support the use of the philosophy of balanced and restorative justice.**

- CorpLINK, under the administrative structure of the Montana Conservation Corps, works with teens between 12 and 18 who have been convicted of misdemeanor offenses. The teens take part in victim-offender mediation, complete community service projects and receive mentoring from Corps crew members. The program emphasizes solving the problem that led to a crime, as well as increasing the public's safety and the offender's accountability. The program is in effect in several Montana communities.  
Headquarters: Bozeman  
Phone: 406-582-8289

#### **6 Develop strategic plans for intervention in gang development.**

- The Great Falls Police Department has assigned two officers to gang education/intervention activities.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-771-1180
- The Billings Police Department has completed a gang assessment survey and assigned officers to work on issues and activities related to gangs.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-657-8200
- The Missoula Police Department is collecting information and identifying individuals believed to be affiliated with or associating with gangs, as well as those who could be at risk for gang recruitment. The department has developed informational materials and presentations for parents, schools and community groups.  
Location: Missoula  
Phone: 406-523-4777

# PROMISING STRATEGIES

## SPECIAL CONCERNS

### 1 Educate parents, teachers and communities on signs of gang activity.

- The Great Falls Police Department has designated two officers who work with community groups and schools on gang-related issues. The officers provide information about gang activity, characteristics, initiation rituals and signs. Their efforts have led to community groups volunteering to help with such things as removal of gang-related graffiti.  
Location: Great Falls  
Phone: 406-771-1180, ext. 205 or ext. 225
- A Helena middle school held an informational meeting on gang awareness, to educate parents and community members on the status of gang activity in Montana and ways to prevent it in Helena.  
Location: C.R. Anderson Middle School  
Phone: 406-447-8898
- The Billings Police Department has completed a gang assessment survey and assigned officers to work on issues and activities related to gangs.  
Location: Billings  
Phone: 406-657-8200
- The Missoula Police Department has developed a packet of materials on gangs, gang activity and gang signs. The packet also includes prevention and intervention strategies for parents, youth, schools, law enforcement and community groups.  
Location: Missoula  
Phone: 406-523-4777
- The Gang Resistance Education And Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program uses specially trained police officers and special agents to teach nine classroom sessions on crime, conflict resolution, responsibility, drugs and goal setting. The program, which is taught to 7th- and 8th-grade students, was developed by Phoenix law enforcement officers in conjunction with local educators and community leaders.  
Location: Washington, D.C.  
Phone: 1-800-726-7070

### 5 Provide effective and long-term drug and alcohol resistance education.

- Through the Drug Abuse Resistance and Education (D.A.R.E.) program, a local law enforcement officer teaches 5th- and 6th-grade students about drug use and abuse and provides skills that help them resist peer pressure. The Montana Department of Justice coordinates efforts for D.A.R.E. programs.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-2026
- A standardized curriculum, offered through various means within communities, has been set up for minors convicted on a first offense of possessing alcohol. To learn more about local programs, contact the Department of Public Health and Human Services.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-444-1202
- The Montana Teen Institute and Teens in Partnership provide summer camps and local mini-camps that promote anti-drug messages and training. The effort is sponsored by the Center for Adolescent Development.  
Location: Helena  
Phone: 406-442-2733



# TASK FORCE MEMBERS



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State Senator  
Deputy County Attorney  
Missoula

**Mr. Craig J. Anderson**  
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer  
Seventh Judicial District  
Glendive

**Dr. Paula Butterfield**  
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Bozeman Public Schools  
Bozeman

**Mr. Norm Calvert**  
Parent representative  
Kalispell

**Mr. Gordon Eldredge**  
Former Director  
Boys & Girls Club of Billings and  
Yellowstone County  
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**Dr. Dan Foster**  
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Youth Dynamics, Inc.  
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Butte

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City-County Health Department  
Missoula

**Ms. C.J. Seidlitz**  
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Great Falls

**Mr. Dave Ward**  
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Billings Police Department  
Billings

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